

**Joint Legislative Committee  
To Review the Master Plan for Higher Education  
Dr. Yasmin Delahoussaye, Vice President of Student Services  
Los Angeles Community College District  
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**Affordability and Financial Aid**

My name is Yasmin Delahoussaye and I am Vice President of Student Services at Los Angeles Valley College, one of 9 colleges in the Los Angeles Community College District, which educates over 200,000 students a year. I have been asked to talk about my segment's role and concerns regarding affordability and financial aid---two issues (believe me) that keeps our students up at night, but before I discuss our concerns, I'd like to preface my remarks by letting you know that, In terms of affordability, community college leaders have a profound respect for the fact that you have kept our enrollment fees the lowest in the nation.

We also appreciate the fact that California has led the way in providing access to higher education with the creation of the Entitlement Cal Grant program, and Board of Governors fee waiver program for the working poor who don't always receive the limited number of competitive Cal grants that we give out. Having said that, I would be remised if I didn't point out an important fact--enrollment fees only represent 5% of the total cost of attendance. It's the remaining 95% for books, housing, transportation, child care, and health care that our students are struggling to pay.

So what are some of the ways that we are addressing affordability and financial aid in community colleges? Let me give you just a few examples. I know that some of our colleges are now offering students an option to rent their textbooks over the high cost of purchasing them, that some colleges are offering students an opportunity to borrow money in the form of emergency loans until their financial aid checks arrive, and that in the Los Angeles area we are subsidizing transportation costs for our students while our construction program is being completed by underwriting the cost of bus passes.

For example, students in Los Angeles can purchase a pass for only \$15 a semester and the pass can be used for 6 months at a time on our buses and subways. We've also worked hard to increase the number of students on financial aid through our participation in campus based and state-wide Financial Aid Awareness events such as "I Can Afford College" and "Cash for College." Have we been successful? I'll let our numbers speak for themselves. Today, In the L.A. Community College District, 48% of our students are receiving some form of financial aid. Can we do more? Absolutely!

We can also learn best practices from other states. For example, in Texas the number of part-time students receiving financial aid exceeds the number of part-time students receiving financial aid in California. When I called to ask why, I was told that Texas receives a huge spike in federal financial aid four times a year when the state legislature appears in ads on television promoting financial aid. That is a best practice that I would like to see us use in California.

Besides discussing ways that we've addressed affordability and financial aid, I've also been asked to talk about our concerns and I want you to know that these concerns focus largely on four broad areas:

Our first concern is the threat of elimination of competitive Cal Grants which is not good news for our students. Only 22,500 of these grants are funded state-wide, yet 158,000 students are eligible to receive them. As you know, competitive Cal grants serve older people like many of those in your assembly and senate districts who are returning to community colleges after being laid off.

This is the only state program (other than fee waivers) for re-entry students at community colleges and, due to the current economy; we are seeing more and more unemployed and re-entry students who need these funds for books and other expenses. We need to maintain competitive Cal Grants.

Second, The threat of eliminating \$10 million from the highly successful EOPS program, eliminating the Cal WORKS program if we don't get federal funding, or reducing fee waivers in significant numbers is truly distressing to us and begs the question during periods of budget cuts, "Why should the highest price to be paid, be placed on low-income students?"

Third, we are seeing many students tier down from the UC system to the CSU system and from the CSU system to community colleges, not only because of restricted classes, but also because of the cost of attendance. It is important that the current level of Cal Grants be maintained so that we can allow students to attend the institutions they are academically eligible to attend per the Master Plan.

Fourth, due to old Ed Code language, Veterans' benefits are still counted as a resource for Cal Grants, even though they are no longer considered a resource for federal aid. Amending the Education Code will preserve college opportunities and affordability for these men and women who have made great sacrifices for this country.

A final point-- so what are the long term effects on students if affordability and financial aid are not improved? As you know, higher education access is essential to economic recovery and moving people from dependency on state funds to becoming tax-payers capable of contributing to the state's economy. If our lowest income students cannot afford to attend a community college as we begin eliminating programs like Cal WORKS, reduce funding for EOPS, or cut Cal Grants, there won't be any options left.

These are the people who will become our new under-employed or unemployed which is part of the reason why the Center for Public Policy and Higher Education has predicted that by 2020, the adjusted income of California residents will have declined by 11%, the largest such drop in the nation.

Key to averting this drop is improving the educational attainment levels of adults, otherwise you can expect that these adults will depend on social support from the state and I know with absolute certainty that no one in this room wants to see that happen.

Thank You!